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ABSTRACT

Several themes are prevalent in the literature on college administration. Motivating staff, planning, conflict management, ethics, power and influence, communication, strategy and decision making, vision, and financial issues are consistently discussed. However, common administrative processes such as planning, morale, and administrative climate are not mentioned. More recent themes include outsourcing, privatization, mergers, reengineering, collaboration, technology, and equity. Only a few applications of management or administrative theories to the administration of higher education institutions were noted in the literature for 1996: these included chaos theory, reengineering, and total quality management (TQM). Restructuring to meet administrative challenges is a major theme and is often discussed with TQM and reengineering. One way that campuses are restructuring is by privatizing or outsourcing certain functions. Collaborations with industries, alumni, and other institutions are also discussed. A major international concern is the issue of accountability, and higher education institutions worldwide are struggling to redefine how they contribute to national goals. Another major theme in the literature is concern about the growing number of legal mandates for equity. Another issue discussed is the way technology can address administrative problems. Overall much of the literature on college administration tends to be opinion pieces or unscientific case studies. (Contains 36 references.) (JM)

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Higher Education Trends (1997-1999): Administration

Adrianna J. Kezar

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Higher Education Trends (1997-1999)
Administration

by Adrianna J Kezar

Several themes are prevalent in the literature on college administration. Many are consistently discussed, such as motivating staff (Henderson); planning, conflict management, ethics, power, and influence (Ringle; Quinley); communication (Higgerson; E. Ryan); strategy and decision making (Keast); vision; and financial issues (written about in a separate trend analysis). Among the literature that describes ongoing administrative concerns, Barbara Townsend and Sheila Bassoppo-Moyo's "If I'd Only Known: Administrative Preparation That Could Have Made a Difference" is insightful in highlighting common concerns among new administrators, exploring issues they wish they had known upon entering their position, and skills that will be important in the future. This type of practical research on administrative knowledge necessary to be successful can have a significant impact on improving practice, especially if it takes into account differences by institutional type and function. Surprisingly, some common administrative processes are not mentioned in the literature, such as planning, morale, and administrative climate and culture.

Other themes are more recent: outsourcing, privatization, mergers, reengineering, collaboration, technology, and equity. One article discusses the key issues for administrators in the 21st century:

1. *Interpreting and managing change;*
2. *Leading academic transformation;*
3. *Balancing constituencies and their opposing claims;*
4. *Finding financial resources; and*
5. *Defending and promoting higher education by meeting growing and inconsistent demands for accountability (Penney).*

This helpful article presents a vision of future administrative challenges, challenges that mirror many of the major trends identified as significant in the literature for 1996.

Underlying the trends are several linking principles:

1. *A concern with saving and containing costs,*
2. *Institutional structure, and*
3. *Best practices rather than research.*

Although the amount of literature on financial issues is minimal, funding is one of the major topics linking administrative themes. Financial issues are reflected in privatization, collaboration, restructuring, technology, deferred maintenance, reengineering, and total quality management (TQM). In addition to an emphasis on finances is an emphasis on the structure of the institution, along with a marked deemphasis on campus culture, climate, or community. Solutions to administrative problems are being addressed almost exclusively through changes in organizational structure, with the exception being TQM initiatives. Last,

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most of the literature is ideas for best practices from particular institutions. One paper presented at an AIR annual forum focuses on the importance of institutional research for faculty's and administrators' work (Harrington et al.); no other literature focuses on the importance of research for decision making and practice. Literature is also minimal on administrative or organizational theory or models. Clearly, a gap exists between administrative practice and research/theory.

Chaos Theory, Reengineering, and TQM

Only a few management or administrative theories are applied to the administration of higher education institutions in the literature for 1996: chaos theory, reengineering, and total quality management. Chaos theory is being applied to strategic planning and helping to explain conditions in an unpredictable environment (Cutright). It has not been translated into a model that institutions as a whole are using to structure operations but is mostly applied to particular institutional responses, for example, predicting enrollments. Many reengineering projects are often associated with the implementation of technology initiatives or the use of technology to restructure a part of the institution (Harel and Partipilo). For example, the University of California at Los Angeles has implemented an innovative computing system. Rather than automate standard manual processes, the university decided to eliminate all preapproval processes and decentralize access controls. Results include significant cost savings, faster turnarounds, dramatic cultural changes, and improved productivity for employees. Reengineering is a growing trend, but it tends to be applied to a particular department or school. Fewer institutions are applying principles of reengineering to fundamentally rethink all of their functions and to become wholly different institutions, as the theory suggests they should. This trend may be a tool of the future as this approach to administration gains popularity.

Total Quality Management (or Continuous Quality Improvement) is discussed more than probably any other administrative model. TQM has been discussed in the literature for over 10 years, and the dialogue has shifted, several years into the transition, to dilemmas involving implementation. For example, Jacquelyn Rudolph and Nancy Howard discuss the progress of TQM at Oregon State University. TQM is no longer marginalized to the noninstructional side of the institution; it is being applied to faculty work, instructional improvement, and curriculum development. TQM principles are also being used as a framework for improving the entire enterprise of higher education. *High-Performing Colleges: The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award as a Framework for Improving Higher Education* (Seymour et al.) describes how TQM can be used as an overarching framework for change.

Wise Moves in Hard Times: Creating and Managing Resilient Colleges and Universities, by Leslie and Fretwell, documents several different approaches to meeting administrative challenges. It is helpful for framing many of the trends described below. Based on data gathered at 13 colleges and universities, it offers an in-depth analysis of how colleges and universities have been affected by hard times, how they have risen to the challenges, and what their responses mean to the public and its support for higher education.

Restructuring

A major theme in the literature, both concern and support, is campus restructuring to meet administrative challenges (see, e.g., Pew Charitable Trusts). Robert Horn and Robert Jerome describe with some concern the application of corporate restructuring efforts, which have had ambiguous results. They emphasize how higher education has adopted many of the methods used in hostile corporate takeovers and leveraged buyouts, which affect "ownership" of the educational process by faculty and the relationship between faculty and administration. Nevertheless, they acknowledge that a common element in successful restructuring is the empowerment of all workers so that they have an active voice in deciding their roles. Others describe how the successful universities of the future will be those that successfully restructure (Guskin). Clearly, the impetus for most restructuring is to save money (Allcorn and Winship). Restructuring is often discussed in conjunction with

TQM and reengineering, which are often intertwined. For example, an article by Patrick Keating et al. describes the origins and strategies for restructuring the administrative framework of Carnegie Mellon University and connections to their efforts to improve quality. More studies about the outcomes of restructuring, examining not only the money saved, but also the impact on the entire institution, are needed.

Privatization and Outsourcing

One way that campuses are restructuring or reengineering is by privatizing certain processes or functions (Doctrow et al.). Privatization often results in substantial cost savings and more efficient processes. For example, Chris Jefferies reviews the trend toward outside contracting of college and university services and issues involved in the decision. The experience of one university in outsourcing its printing services shop is offered as illustration of how this approach can resolve several administrative issues: cost, quality and extent of services, and personnel and program management.

A few studies have shown that staff need to be more involved with the decision to privatize, as the benefits of the arrangement for the institution are often not clearly understood, and many misperceptions by employees can be damaging to the institution (Dillon). This research agenda needs to continue, especially the impact of privatization and outsourcing on the overall institution and the morale of its faculty, administrators, and staff, and successful ways to implement the process.

Collaboration

Although collaboration is certainly not a new concept in higher education, it is becoming much more important in times of financial constraint as campuses try to deliver the same high quality with less funding. Collaboration is also a buzzword within many of the administrative models, such as TQM and reengineering. Certain administrative processes such as outsourcing, however, can affect the atmosphere for collaboration. Thus, administrative change involves some potentially contradictory trends. Three primary types of collaborations are discussed:

1. *Outside constituencies, such as business and industry;*
2. *Former stakeholders, such as alumni or emeritus faculty; and*
3. *Inter- and intrainstitutional collaboration.*

June Paradise Maul, in "Competition and Cooperation: Partnering for Success," describes the benefits and complexities of establishing partnerships with business and industry. She focuses on the educational needs and economic pressures that are creating opportunities for colleges and universities to enter into partnerships with businesses. Through such partnerships, colleges can experience growth, corporations can improve efficient use of training and education dollars, and corporate employees can experience broader, more efficient learning (Nimtz et al.).

Alumni are seen as a source of institutional support. Many institutions are fostering greater collaboration with and stronger ownership by alumni as a strategy for strengthening institutions (R. Ryan). And "Consortia in Higher Education: Leveraging Time, Talents, and Resources" (Shafer and Reed) describes a variety of consortial arrangements in higher education, noting advantages such as savings realized through cooperative efforts, enrichment of academic programs, and improved student services and community outreach, as well as organizational, procedural, and cultural obstacles. The authors note that collaboration does not automatically lead to improved outcomes and describe several factors that help promote successful collaboration, including the presence of significant opportunities, readiness to work together, a clear strategy, favorable timing, patience, and perseverance. More research on the specific outcomes of collaboration and partnerships is necessary. Although some studies outline these benefits, the tendency is to assume that these relationships have positive results and no disadvantages.

Accountability
A major international concern is the issue of accountability, and higher education institutions worldwide are struggling to redefine how they contribute to national goals. Moreover, accountability is a major premise of many management theories. For example, it is one of the major tenets of TQM and often a goal of restructuring. Funding for higher education is being tied to performance indicators, representing more concern about accountability (Banta et al.). John Muffo describes the interrelatedness of accountability, assessment, and outcomes, drawing on the experience of Virginia State Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) during a decade of state-mandated outcomes assessment to outline a number of salient issues for those beginning the process of outcomes assessment. Virginia and Washington serve as models for other states beginning to identify and critique measures of outcome and assessment that are essential to accountability.

Although the literature on accountability is growing, many questions have not been addressed. Does performance funding hurt already minimally funded and poorly run institutions and favor richer, more elite institutions? Is assessment actually improving students' learning? What do students think about assessment? How are administrators and other staff using assessment and accountability measures to improve campus policy and governance? Accountability and assessment seem to be critiqued only in concept and not in practice. The need clearly exists to provide proof to the public and policy makers that higher education institutions are responsible and efficient and meet their goals, but we need to examine the impact of these new processes so they can be reshaped. This balance needs to be an integral part of future research.

Equity
Another major theme in the literature from 1996 is concern about meeting the growing number of legal mandates for equity for disabled students resulting from ADA. Recent administrative and court decisions have complicated issues somewhat (Garfield; Milani), particularly campus policies after *Hopwood* v. *Texas* (Edley) and meeting Title IX requirements after the Brown University case (Emmons and Wendt; Lazerson and Wagener). Sustaining active campus discussions and reviewing campus policies as these situations are further refined is vitally important. We need more timely legal analysis on higher education issues, for the literature is significantly lacking.

Technology
A variety of administrative concerns, including accountability, cost containment, restructuring, and collaboration, can be addressed through technology. Collaboration is critical for successfully planning and implementing technology, especially changes that will save money for the institution, but collaboration is becoming increasingly tenuous as restructuring and accountability alienate faculty and administrators. This area needs research.

The way that technology is helping to address administrative problems is repeatedly discussed in the literature. For example, John Chizmar and David Williams describe the administration's responsibility to support technology advances in instruction, especially to reduce costs. Other articles describe how automation of many college management tasks can lead to changes in office strategies, use of resources, development needs, and career planning, all of which lead to greater efficiencies. The World Wide Web and local area networking have a variety of applications in this area, including tracking of transactions and forms (Glazer).

Overall, much of the literature on college administration tends to be opinion pieces or unscientifically conducted case studies. When research methods are applied, quantitative methods are still more prevalent. Because so many of these issues depend on context (communication, conflict management, and collaboration, for example), they are not so easily studied through quantitative methods. Context-oriented research methods, such as

ethnography or case studies, are less common in studying these issues, which is unusual because the business literature has embraced qualitative methods. Books like Mary Lou Higgerson's *Communication Skills for Department Chairs* that use case studies to explore communication in higher education institutions are helpful, because they synthesize the results of research and help translate research principles into practice.

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